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*Michael Wessels*

# Foraging, Talking, and Tricksters

ABSTRACT: This essay discusses some aspects of Mathias Guenther's work on the /Xam narratives that are contained in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. While his writing on the narratives themselves has been very influential in the field, it has not, itself, been adequately critiqued. I especially examine Guenther's criticism of functionalist and structuralist approaches to the narratives and his characterization of the Mantis figure, /Kaggen, as a trickster in his book *Tricksters and Trancers: Bushman Religion and Society.*

IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT so rich and unique an archive of indigenous oral literature, history, and biography as the Bleek and Lloyd collection of /Xam narratives from the Northern Cape region of present day South Africa has inspired a considerable body of academic and other writing.[1] What is surprising, though, is that relatively little of this writing has been devoted to the examination of the texts themselves. Roger Hewitt's *Structure, Meaning and Ritual in the Narratives of the Southern San,* which appeared in 1986 but which was based on pioneering research in the 1970s, remains the most detailed of available studies.[2] The only other person to have written as extensively about the narratives is anthropologist Mathias Guenther.

The writing that does analyze /Xam texts, including that produced by Guenther and Hewitt, has not been subjected itself to close critical scrutiny. An important exception is Guenther's own criticism of functionalist and structuralist approaches to the narratives in *Tricksters and Trancers: Bushman Religion and Society.* The critical appraisal of the existing body of interpretation is, in my view, an essential prelude to new studies of the narratives themselves. Without



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it, opinions about the stories continue to be reproduced as though they were facts and the theoretical premises behind statements on the narratives remain submerged and uncontested.

I will concentrate in this article on Guenther's *Tricksters and Trancers*, published in 1999. This was not Guenther's first work on /Xam narratives. In 1989 he made an invaluable contribution to /Xam studies by publishing sixteen stories from the Bleek and Lloyd collection in *Bushman Folktales: Oral Traditions of the Nharo of Botswana and the /Xam of the Cape*, including fourteen that were previously unpublished. The /Xam stories are accompanied by Nharo narratives that Guenther himself collected in Botswana. In Guenther's view, this juxtaposition of the stories of two Bushman traditions demonstrated "that both narrative traditions draw from one, common mythological stock" (p. 30).

In my opinion one of the most important contributions Guenther has made to /Xam studies, but one which falls largely outside the scope of this paper, is his reappraisal of the genesis and status as oral literature of the Bleek and Lloyd collection itself in his essay "Attempting to Contextualize /Xam Oral Tradition" (1996). In contrast to the positive way many scholars have considered Bleek and Lloyd and their project, Guenther emphasizes the unequal relationship between the informants and the interviewers, noting that a "master-servant" relationship prevailed in the household (p. 96). Drawing on his own fieldwork experience, Guenther enumerates the differences between a traditional storytelling context and the one in which the Bleek and Lloyd materials were collected. The /Xam narratives, he notes, were collected not through storytelling so much "as story-dictation," a very different situation from the role that storytelling once filled in the hours of leisure time afforded by a relaxed foraging lifestyle (p. 83–84). This unusual context affected the style and content of the narratives in profound ways.

Both Guenther and Hewitt identify /Kaggen (or the Mantis), the figure who dominates many of the /Xam stories of the formative period of the First Times, as a trickster. They approach the /Kaggen materials differently, however, in several important respects. Hewitt divides the /Kaggen materials into two main groups and separates these from other materials such as animal and sidereal stories.[3] He removes particular stories from the anarchic mass of the materials and places them in categories. When the overriding concern is their classification into types, the details of individual stories, with some notable exceptions, become of secondary importance. While Guenther also

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chooses not to concentrate on the textual details of the stories, he is not preoccupied with ordering the materials. Instead he emphasizes the fluidity and openness of the texts and the ambiguity, variability, and protean nature of /Kaggen. He matches his reading of /Kaggen with the requirements of a foraging economy in which socialization tends towards adaptability and a high degree of individual autonomy. The trickster belongs to a foraging ideology, which, he argues, characterizes all Bushman societies as well as those of other hunter-gather cultures worldwide. Guenther also stresses the materials' multivocality, attributing this feature to the ambiguity of the protagonist, /Kaggen, and to the nature of hunter-gatherer orality.

Although Hewitt employs a structuralist approach and Guenther positions himself as an anti-structuralist, they both attribute characteristics of the universal figure of the trickster to /Kaggen. They both also acknowledge his uniqueness among trickster figures and attribute this to the extraordinary and incompatible range of his characteristics. However, they interpret the co-existence of these contradictory elements differently. Hewitt distinguishes group A narratives as ones in which the trickster functions primarily as an opportunity for the articulation of socially conservative messages or as a safety valve for the transference and disposal of anti-social impulses. Group B stories, on the other hand, feature a more serious, savior kind of /Kaggen. Hewitt delineates the structures in which the two kinds of /Kaggen appear and relates these to the separate treatment of the two dominant themes of /Xam society, life and death, on the one hand, and the social order and its negation, on the other. He suggests that particular narrators might demonstrate a predilection for one or the other of these themes and, thus, for one or the other version of the trickster. Guenther, by contrast, attributes /Kaggen's paradoxical qualities, which include the co-existence of divine and absurd character traits, to his trickster nature rather than to his presence in different narrative types.

*Tricksters and Trancers: Bushman Religion and Society* explicitly takes issue with structuralist and functionalist readings of the trickster, readings which, in terms of the Bleek and Lloyd materials, are most extensively and obviously represented by Hewitt's work.[4] Guenther opposes functionalist and structuralist interpretations by conducting a functionalist and structuralist analysis himself and noting its limitations: "I took a double-barreled functionalist-structuralist shot at a couple of features of Bushman myth in chapters 5 and 6, and concluded that

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the analysis it allowed, while arguably elegant, obscured as much as it explained" (1999:244). The structuralist or functionalist analysis to which academicians are bound, he claims, gives the impression that Bushmen "beliefs and myths are logically consistent and symbolically integrated." In fact, argues Guenther, the "'wonderful muddle' that is Bushman religion contains every conceivable trait and pattern" (p. 244). At its center is a god who is simultaneously "destructive and creative."[5] The ambiguous blend of "the numinous and the ludicrous," which characterizes Bushman religion, is difficult for Western scholars to understand. "For deep-seated epistemological reasons we anthropological-academicians cannot tolerate ambiguity" (p. 227).

Bushman religion is related to a life strategy required by a hunter-gather economy: "Bushman belief can be regarded as an ideology consistent with the mobility, openness, fluidity, flexibility, adaptability and unpredictability of the forager's life. . . . Foraging, as argued earlier, is an ideology, a basic ethos, which interacts dialectically with social organization." Bushmen only resort to structure in time of crisis, "the reverse of the more familiar lapse into disorder undergone by ordered societies in like times" (p. 246–47).[6]

Where Hewitt reads /Kaggen as the operational principle of narratives that enable the articulation of social values and normative discourse (1986:183), Guenther situates him in relation to the opportunistic individual qualities required by a foraging economy. For Hewitt, /Kaggen's character provides an example to people of what they should not imitate. Hewitt regards /Xam society as conservative, a necessary quality given the difficulties of surviving in a harsh physical environment. In contrast, Guenther maintains that "Bushman expressive and mental culture, lie at a far remove from the conservative pole" (p. 135).

Guenther accuses both functionalists and structuralists, as well as anthropologists and academics in general (with their entrenched rationalism), of bringing to their interpretations the "a priori assumption" that "there must be structure" (p. 228). Functionalists, he claims, regard all religion and the myths through which religion is articulated as the "grease and glue of tribal society, its core institution." Quoting Malinowski (1948:101), Guenther asserts that functionalists view myth as a "hard-worked, active force" and a "pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom" (1999:228). This does indeed seem an accurate description of Hewitt's functionalist explanations in which the /Kaggen narratives function to reinforce social cohesion and articulate social

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values and knowledge. The structuralist version of this tendency, best represented by Lévi-Strauss, argues for the existence of a "deep-seated rationality within belief and ritual" in which myth "is treated as a culture's 'meta-theory,' containing logical components that are based on binary oppositions and that operate through complex, chainlike metaphorical transformations and inversions" (p. 228). Hewitt's reading of the stories in terms of a nature/culture, raw/cooked, clothed/naked set of oppositions is inspired to a considerable degree by the work of Lévi-Strauss.[7]

According to Guenther, both functionalism and structuralism assume that, beneath the surface of myths, an order lies waiting to be excavated and logically re-presented (1999:229). This results in a two-pronged approach: "one concerns the selection of elements to include in the core, the other the treatment of those elements that lie outside it" (p. 230). Personal variations in the way storytellers present their materials as well as other "peripheral phenomena" are often downplayed in this process. Guenther, we can assume, is referring directly to the comparative approach of Alan Barnard (1992), Sigrid Schmidt (1989, 1996), and himself (1989), but his analysis would apply also to Hewitt for whom "narrative forms" can only be "elaborated at a 'purely' entertainment level by individual performers" (1986:183). Hewitt does, however, qualify this point by devoting a late chapter of his book to a discussion of the influence of individual narrators on stories.

Guenther goes on to identify some of the work in the field of Bushman studies that uses the way of thinking he criticizes. Laurens Van der Post, claims Guenther, tends to project categories onto the materials when he writes about the Mantis as the God of the Bushmen and as an "archetype of renewal and redemption" (1999:231).[8] Yet another school of researchers, Guenther claims, insists on regarding the Bushmen as proto-scientists. Then there is Lewis Williams's "trance hypothesis" and Megan Biesele's work "in which the theme of the equality and complementarity of men and women is seen to be the dominant symbol of Bushman cosmology and ritual" (p. 232).[9] Whatever the paradigm, argues Guenther, whether "theistic, sidereal, animistic, prosaic, shamanic, gender-symbolic," none "encompasses the field in its entirety, despite the claims to the contrary" (p. 232).

Guenther contrasts the rationalist interpretive tendencies listed above with Bushman discourse itself, best exemplified in the figure of the trickster, /Kaggen. This discourse is characterized by contradiction, ambiguity, and fluidity. It is anti-structural, open-ended, indirect, and

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allusive (p. 235–36). Guenther, as already indicated, links Bushman discourse directly to the particular constitution of self required by the demands of a foraging economy. In accordance with the exigencies of hunting and gathering, Bushman communities consist of small groupings of "autonomous individuals rather than norm-governed social personae" (p. 237). Unlike the cooperative activities of more pastoral or agricultural economies, many hunting and gathering activities, including types of hunting, are conducted by individuals and require the flexibility and opportunism displayed in the /Kaggen stories (p. 22). Social groupings are mobile. Individuals or families can move from one band to another with comparative ease, for example in response to conflict or resource scarcity. Only in times of threat, according to Guenther, would the Bushmen resort to structure. In their struggles with the settlers, for instance, they sometimes formed large social groups with centralized and hierarchical structures of power. Such a temporary response to a crisis is the exception.[10] When the threat recedes, they break up into small bands again. These bands are characterized by egalitarianism, loose marital arrangements, and the absence of status and property.

Foraging is subject to many variable and unpredictable circumstances such as rain, game movements, and plant availability. It is a way of life that requires adaptability and a high level of opportunism from individuals as well as a worldview that can accommodate contradiction. In the variable, "topsy-turvy" world of the forager, the trickster is a key or "meta-player" (Guenther 1999:237–38). He embodies "the ambiguity that pervades Bushman mythology and cosmology" (p. 4). He injects "ferment" and "laughter" (p. 238). He both affirms and derides values and beliefs. The mythological space of the First Order, with /Kaggen as its first citizen, is another critical component of this complex.[11] It admits an "extra dimensionality of existence" into the world that parallels the Bushman experience of the complexity and disorder of the everyday and provides another instance of "the creative dissolution of the order of things" that pervades foraging ideology (p. 238). The mythic time and its exemplar, /Kaggen, are directly linked to the ontological requirements of a family-based foraging economy.

Guenther, then, contends that the stories of the First Order, with their ontologically ambiguous beings and dreamlike quality, correspond, to a significant degree, with the ambiguity that characterizes the present: "To a certain extent, the ambiguity of the First Order, with its ontological fluidity, its trickster protagonists, were-beings, and

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meat-women, still persists in the present world" (p. 70). Hewitt, by contrast, considers the primal period as intrinsically separated from the present, a period of chaos that stands in contrast to the relatively stable condition of the everyday world.

Guenther also questions the functionalist assumption, to which Hewitt subscribes, that religion and myth are always "integrating" forces (p. 5). This, he argues, is only true of more structured societies with hierarchically patterned distributions of power. Bushman social configurations, he maintains, are so loose that they may not even constitute a society (p. 7). Accordingly, Guenther locates /Kaggen within a Bushman religion that, he argues, differs from most religion in that it does not legitimate a power structure. Many of the unusual qualities of /Kaggen and other Bushman tricksters can be attributed to their place in societies that are uniquely free of asymmetrical relations of power. Chief among these unusual qualities is that the Bushman trickster is both a protagonist "of whimsical or outrageous tales" and a god, a figure of "numinous power and portent."[12] Nowhere else in the world does "the figure's status as divinity appear to be defined as clearly as in Khoisan religion" (p. 6). Hewitt, incidentally, does not identify /Kaggen as a deity, instead arguing that the beliefs about him "should be situated within the complex of beliefs concerning hunting" (1986:40).

The foraging ethos, maintains Guenther, requires equality and sharing, on the one hand, and self-reliance and individual autonomy, on the other. Altruism and communalism meet self-interest and individualism in a particular way in hunter-gatherer economies (p. 48). An ambiguity, figured in the multi-faceted trickster, arises from the tension between individual agency and collective values.

While the Western tradition requires certainty and structure, Bushman religion, according to Guenther, is based on the premise that knowledge is uncertain. This conclusion follows from the relative absence of power in Bushman society. Since it is freed from its habitual role to legitimate power, myth can "remain within its proper, mythic time, where order is inchoate and power absent" (p. 84). /Kaggen and other Bushman tricksters embody the uncertainty of knowledge and the fluidity of the Bushman mythic-religious complex: they are figures of "profound ontological ambiguity and moral ambivalence" (p. 98), attuned to "a spirit of disorder and flux" (p. 96).

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Hewitt insists that /Kaggen's "role *qua* trickster [be] elucidated within a very specific ethnographic context" (1986:19–20). Guenther, by contrast, regularly conflates /Kaggen and other Bushman tricksters with a global trickster: "The Bushman protagonist, like his trickster colleagues from all over the world, is a creator of beings and things, as well of rules and categories, on the one hand, while on the other, he transforms, distorts and inverts what he has created or decreed" (p. 101).

Hewitt situates /Kaggen firmly on the side of nature. Guenther follows Lewis-Williams (1981:124) in maintaining that /Kaggen, the Mantis of both the /Xam and the Malutis, was "a divinity who maintained the equilibrium between man and nature" (1999:112). The non-dualistic Bushman vision of life, argues Guenther, would not set nature against culture. The merging of contrary characteristics that are morally incompatible in one trickster God is a product of this non-dualism (p. 113), which, in turn, is a product of everyday experience. This, he notes, confuses interpreters schooled in various forms of European dualism. The Bushmen, in turn, with their non-dualism, misinterpret Christianity. They tend to regard Jesus as a trickster figure (p. 116) in spite of the fact that Christianity, a religion of a God who does not laugh and who is an "architect of order and structure," has little room for a "figure who embodies self-contradiction . . . and who is an enemy of boundaries" (p. 121).

Guenther's work provides, I have maintained so far, a tacit but important critique of many of Hewitt's positions concerning the narratives and /Kaggen. Hewitt's taxonomic organization of the materials provides an example of what Guenther identifies as a Western inability to "tolerate ambiguity" (p. 227). The materials, argues Guenther, are not appropriately located within a structuralist framework since they are based on an anti-structural ideology. Guenther also criticizes the functionalist explanations of the type Hewitt offers. In everyday life, he maintains, the Bushmen are guided more "by practical, rational, and secular considerations" than by "their myths and tales." He attributes the tendency of critics to inflate the didactic dimension of tales to close an "articulation between myth and social reality." One should not overemphasize "the normative influence of folklore on the behavior of people" or underestimate "the ludic, recreational" aspects of myth (p. 161).

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## A Critique of Guenther's *Tricksters and Trancers*

Guenther's criticism of the reductive nature of structuralist and functionalist interpretations of the /Xam figure, /Kaggen, is to be welcomed as is his contention that the /Kaggen narratives celebrate the uncertainty of knowledge and the ambiguity of experience. I would agree with Guenther's refusal to separate, metaphorically and ontologically, the period of the First Times, in which many of the narratives are set, from the present (p. 104). Nevertheless, I maintain that Guenther himself exhibits some of the tendencies that he criticizes in the work of other, largely unnamed, scholars.

For a start, his insistence on considering /Kaggen as a type of the universal figure of the trickster stems, in my view, from the same generalizing and rationalist impulse as the functionalist and structuralist readings of the narratives that he opposes. It is revealing that Guenther (1999:6, 124) refers to Hynes and Doty's (1993b) collection of essays on the trickster to support his contentions about /Kaggen while largely ignoring the essays by Tom Beidelman and Anne Doueihi that appear in the same book. Beidelman and Doueihi question both the ontological status of the category "trickster" and the usefulness of the trickster term when applied to particular characters from specific traditions. Guenther states near the beginning of *Tricksters and Trancers* that he wishes to make a contribution to trickster studies: "I take delight in introducing this complex, unusual and highly interesting character to the world's rogue's gallery of such figures" (1999:6). At various points in his text he points out the ways in which /Kaggen exhibits general trickster attributes. For example, he discerns similarities between him and the Winnebago figure, Wakdjungkaga, studied by Radin (p. 103).

Guenther, in fact, employs a more essentialist version of the trickster than most of the writers who use the term. Hynes and Doty (1993a) themselves are careful to qualify their use of the trickster term and to distance their use of it from the metaphysical and archetypal version of the trickster posited by Carl Jung. Jung contributed an influential essay on the trickster to Paul Radin's 1956 book *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, which Guenther describes as the "key work that conceptualized this figure in the study of world mythology and comparative religion" (1999:254). Jung regards the trickster as the manifestation of universal psychological material. Trickster tales are told by societies whose collective consciousness has evolved relatively

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recently out of the animal phase of "an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level" (p. 200). In an essay, Guenther explicitly aligns a pan-Bushman trickster, of which /Kaggen is one manifestation, with Jung's version of the trickster (2002:13–15). In so doing, he appears to subscribe to Jung's psychological evolutionism in which only certain human communities are still open to the "inner psychic experiences" to which the trickster and other "mythical figures correspond" (1956:195). Guenther writes of the Bushman trickster, for example, that he "would like to recall this virtually universal mythological and folkloric figure back to our civilized memory" (2002:14).

In a chapter entitled "The Bushman Trickster," Guenther conflates /Kaggen with several other Khoisan trickster figures (p. 995-125). "He is /Kaggen to the Cape /Xam, Pate and Pisamboro (or //Gawama) to the Nharo and G/wi of Botswana, Piisi.koagu to the //Gana of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Kaoxa (or #Gao!na, !Gara, Hice, or Hoe) to the Zhu/'hoansi of Botswana and Namibia, Jackal and Haiseb . . . to the Hei//om, Nama, and Damara" (p. 97). In a note, he states that the tricksters (the protagonist-divinity figures) of the Khoi and the Bushmen "are the same in form and substance" (p. 253).[13] *Tricksters and Trancers* goes even further than this, though. Its central thesis links the /Xam trickster to the Kalahari trance practitioner.[14] These two figures, for Guenther, are symbolically and structurally analogous. Both are masters of the liminal and the ambiguous; both are meta-signifiers in the foraging ideology of the Bushman.

Guenther's pan-Bushman, comparative approach to the materials also characterizes his treatment of specific (actual) narratives. This strategy has been followed with regard to the narratives by Schmidt (1989, 1996) as well. It underlies, too, Alan Barnard's approach to Khoisan ethnography and David Lewis-Williams's shamanistic theory of rock art (e.g. Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1989). Guenther has aligned himself with these writers over the years in the debates that have dominated Bushman studies. In this regard it is significant that Lewis-Williams also links the trickster with trance in his interpretation of a /Xam story that concerns /Kaggen (1996). Anne Solomon, in particular, has provided a critique of both Lewis-Williams's trance hypothesis and the comparative method in the context of rock art interpretation (1997, 1999, 2008). She maintains that it rests on the false premise that a correlation ex-

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ists between contemporary Kalahari trance practice and the role of the "sorcerer" in the /Xam narratives.

Work such as Guenther's, Barnard's, and Lewis-Williams's, which is based on a posited pan-Bushman or pan-Khoisan culture, often ignores or glosses over important differences and details. It betrays a tendency to dehistoricize, as is evident in Guenther's foraging ideology, exemplified in the figure of the trickster, which downplays much of the historical complexity of the economic and social position of the Bushmen. Edwin Wilmsen explores this history in relation to the Kalahari in his 1989 work, *The Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari.* He argues that for several hundred years, at least, Bushmen in the Kalahari have been caught up in broader political and economic relationships than Guenther's positing of a foraging ideology would suggest. While Guenther regards more complex organization as a response to crisis, Wilmsen argues that significant numbers of Bushmen were pastoralists for long periods of time, resorting to foraging only as a response to dispossession. He offers a history in which Kalahari Bushmen switched between foraging and pastoralism many times during the thousand or so years of Iron Age occupation of the Kalahari. Robert Gordon, writing about Namibia, similarly argues for a more complex view of the Bushmen than the image of the perennial hunter-gatherer allows. Bushmen, he contends, were central to the ivory trade, which was chiefly conducted by hierarchically organized Bushman groupings. In his 1994 masters thesis, Peter Jolly maintains that there was "contact between San and Khoi pastoralists at the Cape for 1800 years" (p. 23), a contact which resulted in much greater economic, ideological, and political complexity than the model of pristine Bushman foragers would concede. It is consistent with the essentializing, ahistorical thrust of Guenther's work that he should have argued so strongly against the historical and materialist position of writers such as Wilmsen (Guenther and Lee 1993).

/Xam contact and conflict with Korana groups and with white settlers are documented in the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks. One of the informants, #Kasin, was himself half Korana, a fact that Bleek might have tried to suppress since he failed to "record a genealogical diagram for #Kasin, [as] he did for all his other informants" (Bank 2006:205–07). This omission, conjectures Bank, was because Bleek's "ethnographic enquiries were also shaped in terms of race" (p. 207). The /Xam traded with whites (p. 152) and with the Tswana to the north

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(p. 93). "There were Xhosa migrant communities living not too far from Dia!kwain's home area" (p. 253), as well as a little to the south of /Kabbo's home at the Bitterpits (p. 141). All the chief informants spoke Afrikaans and had worked on white farms at some point in their lives. If Wilmsen's thesis is correct, then during the informant's lifetime (or perhaps even before), /Xam individuals and groups would not have consistently needed to develop the traits that Guenther argues were inculcated by the foraging ideology embodied in /Kaggen. At other times different life-coping strategies would have been required. Guenther's foraging ideology is premised on flexibility but this flexibility is based on the notion that the /Xam's primary and essential way of life was foraging. Deviations from foraging were temporary.

Guenther does not, on the whole, engage with the texts in any detail. In this regard, Brown notes that "anthropologists like Biesele and Guenther generally offer little discussion of thematic intricacy" (1998). Guenther's statements follow from his broad consideration of the narratives and pan-Bushman culture in general, rather than from the sort of close reading of the texts that might identify discursive strategies and signifying practices. Guenther celebrates the Bushman proclivity towards uncertainty of knowledge, embodied in the ambiguous trickster protagonist. Guenther himself, however, does not explore the play of signifiers that might offer evidence of this sort of uncertainty but instead submits the texts to generalized claims. For example, his remarks about "The Story in which the Mantis Assumes the Form of a Hartebeest" concern the universal ability of the trickster to regenerate himself (1999:105). In an earlier consideration of the same story, he detects a sexual element that is overtly present in similar stories from southern Africa. However, this element is absent from the /Xam story for reasons Guenther attributes to the Victorian sensibilities of the collectors (1996:90). This valuable insight is the result of his comparative approach. But this approach also leads Guenther to miss the generative play of many of the signifiers in the narrative that are specific to /Xam discourse. For instance, the fact that the antelope in the /Xam story is a "hartebeest" links this narrative explicitly to the hunting observances in which /Kaggen is intimately associated with the hartebeest. Instead of making this specific connection, Guenther links these narratives to stories featuring another type of antelope.

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Although Guenther criticizes the academic impulse to submit materials to an overarching paradigm, this tendency is exemplified in his own Platonic approach to classifying the /Xam narratives. He identifies /Xam characters with types in an ideal realm of pan-Khoisan narrative. His theory of a foraging ideology also works as an overarching paradigm into which he fits the narratives. It seems to me that his reading of the /Kaggen of the narratives is predetermined by this thesis and by his position regarding the role of the trickster in world mythology.

Guenther's yoking of a rigid social structure to the intellectual tradition of structuralism also appears to require closer examination. He implies that structuralism itself originates in tightly structured societies. Only an "anti-structural" social configuration like the /Xam band could have at its ideological center a figure as anarchic and unpredictable as /Kaggen. Guenther suggests that there is a correlation between highly organized social formations with centralized authority structures and rationalist intellectual tendencies, a correlation that would be difficult to prove through a detailed examination of intellectual movements in the west. The twentieth-century intellectual phenomenon of structuralism did not always originate in the most tightly structured sites of European society. This link appears to be more metaphorical than historical. Guenther, in my opinion, too loosely conflates philosophical or linguistic structuralism with social structure.

Guenther's attitude towards power in Bushman social formations also needs to be examined more closely. The foraging ideology he attributes to Bushmen is based on individual flexibility and the avoidance of structure whenever possible. This ideology is embodied in the character of /Kaggen, with his irreverent attitude to power and authority, as well as his predilection for opportunism. Guenther contends that societies like the /Xam are "free of hierarchy and power structures" (p. 5). It seems to me that this argument stems, at least in part, from a romantic philosophy of the noble savage that Derrida links to a nostalgia for a lost origin (1976). It also rests on a narrow understanding of power that Foucault's work, especially, has rendered redundant (1970, 1980). Guenther himself comes close to the more sophisticated analysis of power pioneered by Foucault when he observes that individuals in such small groups are continually under surveillance (1999:50). At different points in his text he also acknowledges that Bushmen do experience social conflict and that Bushman societies exhibit unequal gender relations (p. 44–45). The male activity of hunting, in particular, claims an unequal "share of

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social, political and religious significance, if not power" (p. 148). Despite these qualifications, the overall thrust of Guenther's thesis is to downplay the existence of power relations in /Xam society. In the statement just quoted, he seeks to distance the exercise of power from an unequal "share of social, political and religious significance" (p. 148). He fails to acknowledge that power can be exercised through such phenomena as tradition, precedent, and the pressure of the group, as much as through formal power relations. Guenther describes the presence of a mechanism of "reverse-domination," which deflates anyone who appears to be getting above himself and which is displayed in the narratives whenever /Kaggen overreaches himself (p. 34). This mechanism, he claims, is symptomatic of the relative absence of power relations in Bushman culture. It seems to me, though, that this mechanism could just as easily be read as indicative of tensions over power within /Xam bands, tensions which might even be exacerbated by the absence of formal power structures. Reverse-domination could then be seen as a means whereby the group exercises power over the individual. Its presence registers the contestation of certain kinds of power, not the absence of power itself. Power informs the very process of subjectification; it is never absent from signification.[15] Identities, including the /Xam identities discerned by Guenther that are predicated on the freedom of the individual from the group, are formed within discursive and ideological systems that are sites of power.

The absence of power, at least in its institutionalized guise, is crucial to Guenther's positing of hunter-gatherer society as fundamentally different from other kinds of economic and social formations. For example, he claims that religion in Bushman societies is freed from its usual role of legitimating power. This allows Bushman religion to concentrate instead on "altered states." "Myth, too, is able to remain within its proper mythic time, where order is inchoate and power absent" (p. 84).

Guenther's position regarding power within Bushman communities parallels his statements concerning Bushman orality in both *Tricksters and Trancers* and in his essay, "*N//àe* ('Talking'): The Oral and Rhetorical Base of San Culture" (2006). In *Tricksters and Trancers*, Guenther consistently emphasizes the radical difference between speech and writing, stating that "unlike the written style, which is fixed, orality, by its very nature, creates variation" (p. 85). In a discussion of the work of Megan Biesele (1993), he notes that "oral texts evince a greater propensity for being metaphorical and oblique" (p. 85). Orality, for Guenther, is on the side of spontaneity, fluidity, ambiguity and an absence of power (embodied by

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/Kaggen) while writing falls on the side of rigidity, structure, and power. Rather curiously, considering his linkage of orality with variation, his avowed dislike of structuralist reductionism, and his stress on ambiguity and uncertainty in the narratives and in Bushman religion, Guenther claims that Western familiarity with writing results in "outsiders such as anthropologists and folklorists" overemphasizing differences and gaining "the impression that people's ideas and beliefs are much more varied in their meaning than is the case from the native perspective" (1999:85).

Jacques Derrida has argued that the logocentric thought of writers like Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss links orality to community and writing to a lack of authentic relationships (1976:135). The consequence of this way of thinking is that people such as the /Xam are divested of politics and power, which is associated with writing and dependent on the absence of genuine and direct social relations. Such societies are pre-political because politics presupposes that liberty has already been lost; politics is "always the supplement of a natural order somewhere deficient" (p. 298).

Duncan Brown (2006) discusses an extract from the Bleek and Lloyd materials that is entitled "//Kabbo's Intended Return Home" in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, the selection of /Xam materials Lloyd published in 1911. Brown argues that //Kabbo's discourse shows a sophisticated ability to traverse the epistemological binaries of Western thought, such as modernity/pre-modernity and orality/writing, in order to assert a claim to his land and to a particular identity (p. 19). Brown links this ability to //Kabbo's textual skills, arguing that the textual extends well beyond the realm of actual writing. It encompasses a variety of "forms of cultural coding" such as rock art, tracking, and other activities that involve the interpretation and manipulation of signs (p. 12).

Guenther quotes and discusses part of the same piece by //Kabbo at the beginning of his article, "*N//àe* ('Talking'): The Oral and Rhetorical Base of San Culture" (2006). Where Brown seeks to emphasize the textual (or written) nature of /Xam discourse and other cultural practices, Guenther posits a radical difference between a way of life based on orality and other sorts of social configurations which depend on writing.

Finally, Guenther's critique of functionalism does not liberate his own text from functionalist explanations. This use of functionalism is to be expected in chapter six of his book when he deliberately invokes a functionalist reading in order to question it (p. 146–63). However, functionalist thinking underlies much of his argument in

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the rest of book. Guenther's major thesis, the articulation of Bushman religion (which includes narratives and the figure of the trickster) with a foraging ideology that socializes individuals for flexibility, relies on a functionalist foundation.

Guenther actually confesses his functionalist position at the beginning of his book: "my framework is essentially sociological (or functionalist)" (p. 3, parentheses in original). He then proceeds to consistently criticize the reductionism of functionalist interpretations. After he identifies his analytical framework as functionalist, he writes that "the paradigms based on these two notions, functionalism and structuralism, have severe limitations in the context of an analysis of Bushmen religion" (p. 4). Since he links narratives to religion, it follows that these limitations also apply to his own analysis of the /Xam texts.

## /Kaggen in the Story of the Mantis and His Son

After a reading of Hewitt and Guenther, we are left with two versions of /Kaggen. In many ways, these versions compete. While Hewitt struggles at times to reconcile his reading of /Kaggen as a trickster with his close reading of the /Xam texts, Guenther, with his predilection for comparative mythology and Jungian archetypes, displays no such unease. While it is incontestable that both Hewitt and Guenther have significantly advanced our understanding of the Bleek and Lloyd materials, it is my opinion that their designation of /Kaggen as a trickster has impeded a more complex engagement with the /Xam texts. The sign "/Kaggen," I would contend, should be situated within /Xam discursive practice itself rather than placed within an idealist framework of universal types, the "world's rogue's gallery" of trickster (Guenther 1999:6). Nor can /Kaggen be reduced to one of the "many faces" of a pan-Khoisan trickster, as Guenther (1999:97), following Joseph Campbell, asserts.

I do not claim that /Xam discourse is a closed system or that all comparisons between /Kaggen and other figures from the discursive traditions in the area are unhelpful. The comparative approaches of Guenther (1989) and Schmidt (1989, 1996) to the narratives has undoubtedly contributed to a deeper understanding of the range and interrelatedness of Khoisan traditions. An unfortunate side effect of this approach, and one identified by Guenther himself (1999:230), is that it tends to regard the actual details of the stories as incidental regional

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variation. I would insist, by contrast, that the elements in the narratives, including those that feature /Kaggen, are not adventitious. The elements all derive their ability to generate meaning from the intertextual relationships formed within /Xam signifying practice, to which they, in turn, contribute. The sign "/Kaggen" generates multiple layers of meaning as a result of its interactions with a multitude of other /Xam signs and its place within a /Xam order of things rather than as a consequence of its relationship with cultural figures in distant parts of the world or even in the southern African region. These meanings often remain elusive to the critic, not simply because of the relative inaccessibility of /Xam culture but also because, as Guenther himself emphasizes throughout his book, multivocality is intrinsic to /Xam discourse itself. The /Xam narratives which feature /Kaggen should be approached in a way that foregrounds all the elements in them rather than in one which regards the details of particular narratives as subordinate to a universal narrative of the trickster or to a foraging ideology. I have illustrated this contention at greater length elsewhere (2007). Here I shall make the same point with a brief consideration of the story of "*!gaunu tsaxau* (the son of the Mantis), the Baboons, and the Mantis," the title given to it in Bleek and Lloyd (1911:16), referred to hereafter as "The Son of the Mantis," the heading which appears at the top of each page in Bleek and Lloyd (1911:16–37).

In this story, /Kaggen sends his son to fetch a stick that he wishes to throw at the baboons or use against the baboons in a hostile manner (p. 21). The baboons discover /Kaggen's intent after questioning the boy. The news is circulated amongst the troop. One of the baboon elders orders the other baboons to "strike the child with your fists" (p. 23). A blow results in the boy's eyeball falling out of his head. The baboons then begin to play a game of ball with the eyeball, singing a playful song as they do so. /Kaggen finds out what is going on in a dream. He proceeds to try and rescue his son. Armed with his quiver, he approaches the baboons. Hiding his tears from them, /Kaggen takes off his kaross and begins to play with the eyeball with a feather brush that he takes out of his bag. The startled baboons stop playing until /Kaggen encourages them to resume their game. /Kaggen anoints the eyeball with the sweat from his armpits. This enables the eye to ascend into the sky. The baboons search for the eyeball. After failing to find it in /Kaggen's bag, they turn on him and begin to beat him. /Kaggen fights back but gets the worst of it. He extricates himself by

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flying away to a water hole with his quiver and bag. He takes the eye out of his bag and puts it in the water, proclaiming that "Thou must grow out, that thou mayest become like that which thou hast been" (p. 31). He then returns home, where he is met by his grandson, the Ichneumon, who asks him what has happened. /Kaggen relates his story. His son-in-law, Kwammang-a, scolds him for mixing with strangers through the Ichneumon since a son-in-law may not directly address his father-in-law. Later /Kaggen returns to the waterhole, approaching carefully so as not to frighten the child whom the water has resurrected. The child soon grows back to his former size. /Kaggen makes clothes for him, catches him when he lies in the sun, puts the clothes on him, and anoints him with his scent. He reminds the boy of his identity and before they return home together tells him that he, /Kaggen, is his father. The Ichneumon asks /Kaggen why he had told them that the boy was dead. /Kaggen relates how the boy had indeed been killed by the baboons but was restored to life by the water in the pool.

/Kaggen is clearly a central figure in this narrative although Hewitt identifies /Kaggen's son as the protagonist (1986:205). Nevertheless, I would argue, that /Kaggen is not the necessary condition for the narrative nor the source of the wider discursive field in which the story falls. Rather the sign "/Kaggen" gains its power to generate meaning from its place within the wider signifying system of which it is a part. I would also maintain that this narrative contains a configuration of elements that is peculiar to /Xam narratives and that have not been derived from a universal genre of trickster stories. A discussion of "The Son of the Mantis" which investigates these peculiar elements would have to consider the signification of baboons, waterholes, sticks, body scent, and eyes, for a start. The ways in which these terms are used in the 12,000 notebook pages that comprise the Bleek and Lloyd collection of notebooks are directly relevant to understanding this story. Even when these references do not seem linked to the story, a closer exploration of the web of signification in which they occur often reveals unsuspected resonances with a narrative (Wessels 2007:315–20). Signifiers such as "waterhole" occur as frequently in the materials and display a similar capacity to generate meaning as the signifier "/Kaggen." While the consideration of the sign "waterhole" and the others that appear in the text is essential to a comprehensive exploration of this story, the parameters of this article force me to confine myself to some remarks about the sign "baboon" in the materials. I do so in order to support my contention that a reading

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of the narratives that concentrates primarily on /Kaggen downplays the web of /Xam textuality from which narratives are constituted and which they, in turn, help to constitute. This is true, too, of Guenther's focus on /Kaggen as a trickster who figures a foraging ideology.

The story in which the baboons play with /Kaggen's son's eyeball is not the only piece concerning baboons that appears in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore.* In another extract, a man named Xabbiten//Xabbiten encounters a group of baboons on his way back from visiting some white men from whom he had procured flour (Bleek and Lloyd 1911:255–59). The baboons see him coming and say, "Uncle Xabbiten//Xabbiten seems to be returning yonder; let us cross his path, that we may knock him down." The man responds to the action of the baboons by teasing them about the steepness of their foreheads. This angers the baboons who decide to beat him more. The baboon children ask for the man's head with which to play. The man climbs up a krieboom and scares the baboons away by pretending to talk to a group of white men who have guns with which to shoot the baboons.

This piece belongs to historical time. Not only does it contain references to white men and guns but it was told to the narrator, Dia!kwāin, by Xabbiten//Xabbiten himself (1911:254). It belongs, it would appear, to a different order of discourse than the story of /Kaggen's son. The story of /Kaggen's son belongs to the first-order narratives. In contrast, Xabbiten//Xabbiten narratives belong to the discourse of the present order, one in which, if /Kaggen features at all, it is as the supernatural protector of the game rather than as the character of the first times who lives in a family group. Nevertheless the two texts display several common features, consistent with their location within the broader field of /Xam signifying practice. In both extracts, trouble follows from engagement with baboons and the baboons either play with or desire to play with human parts before they are outwitted by human or quasi-human ingenuity. As evidenced by the second extract, these features are not contingent on /Kaggen's presence in the text.

Several other pieces in the Bleek and Lloyd materials reinforce this view. They provide further intertextual illumination of the relation between people and baboons and the way that the sign "baboon" signifies in /Xam discourse. Many of these pieces were published by Wilhelm Bleek's daughter, Dorothea, in the journal *Bantu Studies* in the 1930's. Dorothea Bleek chose to concentrate on baboons for her first set of selections for the journal. As Jeremy Hollmann, who has

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edited her *Bantu Studies* pieces points out, she published materials that exemplified /Xam culture rather than recounted narratives (2005:2). All the information assembled by Dorothea Bleek regarding baboons was collected from Dia!kwäin, the same narrator who described the encounter of the man with the troop of baboons.

The first extract, entitled "Baboons Speak Bushmen," is drawn "from three separate narratives from Dia!kwäin's twenty-fourth notebook" (Hollmann 2005:10–13). It discusses the ability of baboons to speak /Xam and how it is easy to mistake a group of baboons for humans when one hears them from a distance. Both the /Xam and the baboons make use of a special plant. A baboon will hold a stick from the plant in its mouth that "tells it about things which it does not know" (p. 10). These sticks also protect baboons from pain and illness and warn them of danger. Not surprisingly, the Bushmen try to get hold of these sticks from the baboons (p. 11). Men kill baboons in order to procure some of their hair, which is used as a charm to protect children against illness.

According to Dia!kwäin, baboons know the names of people whom they have never met (p. 14). Although baboons can speak /Xam, people should not speak to them and the place in which the conversation occurs will be burnt (p. 15–16). Talking to baboons on the morning of a hunt militates against success in the hunt. People should ignore baboons and hunters should only indirectly refer to baboons (p. 15). People generally avoid using the /Xam term for baboon so that the baboons do not know that they are being discussed (p. 17). Many observances attend the hunting of baboons. Special marks are made on the bow after shooting a baboon so that, among other things, "the baboon's eyehollow" would not remain in the bow. Furthermore, hunters observed that the "baboon's death would live in our bows." In addition, baboons were once men and react like men when they are being hunted (p. 20–21). A baboon can shoot an arrow back at the hunter who has shot it. To prevent this, the hunter should tell it that it is a girl's arrow with which it has been shot. This makes it ashamed and it accepts its death (p. 22–23).

In the /Xam stories of the first times, the divide between human and animal is blurred. In this story, the characters are animals who live like people and who display human characteristics. It is also true, as has been pointed out by Hewitt, Guenther, and Hollmann, that the sign "baboon" most clearly signals the play of difference and similarity between people and animals in both the first-time narratives and the discourses of the present order which appear in the Bleek and Lloyd

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materials (Hewitt 1986:38, 109–10; Guenther 1999:74; Hollmann 2005:7–9). Baboons were people even before people existed (Hollmann 2005:24). The only other animals with quite this status were the quagga and the hare. The baboons play a human game and come to watch people play the same game (p. 24–28). Guenther observes that "baboons have wives like humans; they have speech, as well as songs; and they understand the human language and call the Bushmen by their names" (1999:74). This produces a high level of "moral ambiguity" when it comes to killing baboons.

Hewitt claims that baboons "represent the stereotype of undesirable in-laws. They are seen repeatedly as undesirable neighbors whom one would certainly not want one's daughter to marry" (1986:109). In one narrative discussed by Hewitt, a girl who marries a baboon begins to look more and more like him (L. VIII. 18. 7608–25). Hewitt conjectures that this structure may reinforce the importance of marrying "within one's own racial group." The story, suggests Hewitt, carries resonances of the practice of Khoe-khoen men stealing /Xam women as wives. Hollmann (2005:8) notes, in relation to the story in which the baboon marries the girl, that marriage was often a euphemism for sex, as also pointed out by Guenther (1996:90). Hollmann mentions that the girl in the story was menstruating. The baboon violated several taboos by seducing a girl in this condition. She was confined to her hut and could only be visited by a narrow category of old women at this time. Hollmann links the baboon materials with /Xam hunting observances but also surmises that the need to distinguish between people and baboons might have had "an ecological component" since the two species often subsisted on the same plants (p. 7).

The scope of this article only allows me to supply the barest outline of the web of signification carried by the sign baboon. But even this brief overview shows its presence in some of the chief signifying fields of /Xam discourse and practice: hunting, menstruation, identity, marriage, death, and medicine. In my opinion, a story such as "The Son of the Mantis" has to be considered in terms of all these fields as well as that of /Kaggen. I will conclude by briefly offering some preliminary suggestions as to how this broad field is present in the story. I should reiterate, though, that other elements in the story besides baboons, such as sticks, sons, eyes, body parts, and waterholes would have to be followed in the same way for an analysis to do justice to this intricate narrative.

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It is not clear from the narrative whether /Kaggen intended to hunt the baboons or to chase them away. Hollmann's observation regarding ecological competition might have provided him with a reason to chase the baboons. Equally, though, as Guenther generally suggests in relation to the /Kaggen materials, he could have been following his trickster nature by trespassing beyond the boundaries of accepted behavior for its own sake. Kwammang-a's reprimand supports this: "Why is it that grandfather continues to go among strangers [literally, people who are different]?" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911:33). /Kaggen, though, refutes this. He implies that his actions were driven by love for his son: "Thou dost appear to think that yearning was not that on account of which I went among the baboons" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911:33).

If hunting and killing the baboons was /Kaggen's motive, then the question needs to be asked as to whether he was intending to eat the flesh of the baboon or to use it for medicine, which is the culturally sanctioned use. Given the similarity of human and baboon flesh, eating it would virtually constitute cannibalism, an act of identity transgression that equals marrying or having sex with baboons. Did /Kaggen violate the hunting observances connected to baboons? If he had used the name of the baboons directly while issuing his instructions to his son he would have done so. His son certainly does so by talking to the baboons. These questions arise from the intertextual field in which the story is situated rather than directly from the story itself. Nevertheless, they are present by virtue of this interpenetrating web of signification.

The question of identity is directly expressed in the story, especially in Kwammanga's assertion that one should not go among strangers. The story, as well as the wider discourse about people and baboons, suggests that identity requires both difference and similarity. Animals need to be separated from people and from other species of animal. This need, though, also emphasizes the ontological closeness of humans to animals. Nowhere in the /Xam materials is the view expressed that humans are both radically different from and superior to animals. Baboons, who share traits such as speech with people and whose flesh resembles human flesh, are especially close to humans. They have, therefore, to be distinguished even more rigorously than other animals from people, even if these people are only proto-people, as is the case in the story of "The Son of the Mantis." Hewitt, as we have seen, relates this structure to the need to identify suitable categories of people to marry as well as to racial differentiation. Given Guenther's

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contention that marriage sometimes stands in for sex (1996:90), it is possible that a story such as this alludes to an incest taboo or indirectly to sexual intercourse with a menstruating girl.

If any of these conclusions sound fanciful, it is a fancifulness produced as much by our distance from the world of the materials and the lack of space to elaborate properly on all the links between signifiers as by the multivocal and ambiguous nature of the text itself. Guenther would agree that the texts are ambiguous and produce multiple meanings. He attributes their ambiguity, as we have seen, to the fact that the narratives participate in the "'wonderful muddle' that is Bushman religion" (1999:244). He maintains that their ambiguity makes them amenable to a variety of hermeneutic strategies. It is true that such stories might equally support Hewitt's contention that they allow for admonitory lectures that reinforce the status quo as much as Guenther's assertion that the ambiguity in the stories, encapsulated in the character of /Kaggen, is related to the socialization of a flexible personality type to the uncertainties of hunter-gathering life. I would rather attribute the texts' amenability to multiple modes of interpretation to the ideological and discursive nature of all textual production, written and oral, than to the particular nature of Bushman religion and orality. In my opinion, the application of this insight to /Xam discursive practice in a self-reflexive and detailed manner offers fresh possibilities for reading the materials in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. In this sort of reading, it is likely that the /Xam texts themselves will expose some of the limitations of the hermeneutics that seek to engage with them. As a result, the historical and local nature of an analytical tradition with universalist epistemological ambitions will become more apparent. Guenther's text indicates a few of the limitations of functionalism and structuralism. However, as I have argued in this paper, its comparative approach and reliance on universal figures such as the trickster and the trancer, as well as its positing of a radical, essential divide between written and oral production, extends universalist thinking even as it seeks to challenge it. Nor does his analysis of individual stories, with the exceptions I have mentioned, attempt to engage with their textuality. This engagement is critical if progress is to be made in the analysis of the /Xam texts.

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## Notes

1. The Bleek and Lloyd collection comprises nearly twelve thousand notebook pages of materials collected from /Xam informants in the 1870s in Cape Town by German linguist Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd. It is one of the largest records in the world of the language and culture of a people whose language is no longer extant and who themselves did not keep written records. The /Xam were a predominantly hunter-gatherer people whose homeland was situated to the south of the Orange River in what is today the Northern Cape province of South Africa. Settler expansion led to their displacement, murder, and eventual incorporation into the farm laboring population.

2. The San are also referred to as Bushmen. Both terms have denigratory origins. The choice as to which term to use is largely a matter of personal choice. I use the term "Bushman" in this paper, the term also preferred by Mathias Guenther whose work forms its subject. Where possible it is best to use the name that individual groups use for themselves, such as /Xam or Nharo. The term "Khoisan" refers to the pre-colonial inhabitants of southern Africa whose languages formed part of the same wide linguistic family and who can be distinguished linguistically from Bantu speakers. Scholars have generally separated these people into Khoi pastoralists and San hunter-gatherers. This division is not clear-cut, though. The terms "Khoi" and "San" are more accurately used to convey linguistic rather than economic distinctions.

3. Hewitt, of course, is not alone in separating the materials in this way. The published collections, from Bleek and Lloyd (1911) to Lewis-Williams (2000), including Guenther (1989), all order the materials in various ways. Hewitt's interest in constructing structural typologies, though, means that his ordering of the materials is more systematic and forms an integral part of his understanding of them.

4. Guenther, it should be noted, does not mention Hewitt's work directly although he cites it frequently. It is fair to assume, however, that most of his criticism is leveled at Hewitt's work since the only other writer to have examined /Xam stories in some detail when Guenther published his book was Lewis-Williams (1996, 1997), whose own analysis relies quite heavily on Hewitt's structuralist analysis of the stories.

5. Like Barnard (1992), Guenther posits a pan-Khoisan deity with multiple and ambiguous qualities. In my view, this deity is attributed to the /Xam chiefly as a result of their location as a Khoisan people. There is little evidence in the Bleek and Lloyd collection to support it (Hewitt 1986:40).

6. While Guenther and Pelton (1980) both emphasize the fluidity of a worldview that contains the trickster, Guenther relates this fluidity to economic practice while Pelton reads it as primarily a philosophical and theological orientation. Lewis Hyde (1998) links the trickster with hunting, similar to the way in which Guenther links him to hunting and gathering. The difference is that Hyde operates within a biological evolutionary framework. The trickster has his roots in hunting and the development of the intellect that accompanied it. He transcends his origins, though, and flourishes in all cultural contexts. Guenther's Bushman trickster is more firmly located within a hunting and gathering economy. This does not prevent him from linking the Bushman trickster elsewhere to a great

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many other figures from around the world, including the devil and Bugs Bunny (Guenther 2002:12–13).

7. Hewitt lists several of Lévi-Strauss's texts in his bibliography although he only refers to his work once in the body of his text (1986:102, 264).

8. Rather surprisingly, given his own employment of the trickster motif, Guenther does not extend his critique of Van der Post's use of the language of Jungian archetypes to a consideration of the use of the term trickster itself (2002).

9. Hewitt is conspicuous by his absence from this list even though, as I have already mentioned, his work contains the most extensive treatment of the narratives and exemplifies many of the positions Guenther wishes to criticize.

10. Hewitt notes that "children were explicitly encouraged to be self-supporting and learn to gather, catch and cook food as an insurance for themselves against the sudden loss of both or either parent" (1986:30). Although Hewitt is discussing the vicissitudes of hunting and gathering in a difficult environment here, the evidence of the notebooks and the narrators' biographies make clear that settler violence was a chief cause of adult mortality. The genocidal context in which the narrators were raised underlies the statement of one of Lucy Lloyd's chief informants, Dia!kwain, that being an orphan wasn't a "light thing" but "a great thing it is" (L.V.6. 4411 rev.). The encouragement of self-reliance might, then, be seen as a response to crisis. Guenther's thesis, though, contends that cooperation superseded individualism in times of crisis.

The reference for Dia!kwain employs the conventional method for referencing the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks. The quote is from a note that occurs in the sixth notebook and the 4411th page collected by Lloyd from Dia!kwain. A Roman numeral identifies each informant. The abbreviation "rev" following the notebook number indicates that reference is being made to the reverse pages, which Bleek and Lloyd used to record information or make observations that illuminated the main text.

11. The /Xam materials are generally considered as belonging to one of two periods or orders, the first of which represents the early formative times, considered as mythical or fictive, while the other represents the present, or "real," order of existence. The formative period is usually referred to as the First Times or the First Order and its inhabitants as the people of the Early Race, the First People, or the First Bushmen.

12. This contention, it seems to me, is not different in kind from Van der Post's contention, criticized by Guenther (see above), that the Mantis is the God of the Bushmen and an "archetype of renewal and redemption" (Guenther 1999:231). Other figures, too, despite Guenther's assertion of /Kaggen's uniqueness, have commonly been accorded the attributes of trickster and deity in the literature on the trickster. An example would be the Yoruba figure, Esu (Gates 1988:52). Jung also attributes a dual nature to tricksters that includes the divine (Jung 1956:195).

13. At least two Bushman "trickster" figures appear in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. The !Kung texts, which Lucy Lloyd collected from !Kung informants, feature a figure named Xue. Lloyd herself noted the similarity between this character and /Kaggen (Bank 2006:373). The differences between Xue and /Kaggen appear to me, though, to be at least as significant as the similarities. Xue's character is

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unambiguous. He never acts as protector or benefactor as /Kaggen does. Since he is incorrigible, he allows no opportunity for the articulation of social norms by other family members, as Hewitt claims that /Kaggen's escapades do. He does not exhibit affection towards anyone or anything. He is not, as /Kaggen is, a lover of animals. He plays tricks but also delights in violence and murder. A close comparison of the two figures, in my opinion, calls into question the usefulness of reading both of them in terms of the broad category "trickster."

14. The linking of /Kaggen and /Xam culture generally to shamanism and the practice of trance has also been central to Lewis-Williams trance hypothesis of rock art (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1989). It is not certain, though, that the trance dance was ever practiced by the /Xam. There is no unambiguous evidence of trance dancing in the Bleek and Lloyd collection (Solomon 1997). The rock art debate has been accompanied by another heated exchange in Bushman studies, one in which Guenther has directly participated, which concerns the validity of characterizing the Bushman as intrinsically "hunter-gatherers" (Guenther and Lee 1993). In contrast to Guenther, Mac Linscott Ricketts separates the shaman and the trickster, maintaining that the shaman represents the impulse to transcend "the weakness of the human condition" while the trickster helps people endure "the absurdity of human existence" (Ricketts 1993:105).

15. Foucault writes: "Between every point of a social body, between a man and a woman, between the members of a family . . . there exist relations of power" (1980:187).

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